

Trees & Septics



Tree root invasion of septic tank absorption fields, drop boxes, and tanks is a long standing problem in the maintenance of on-site treatment systems. Many trees and shrubs readily invade these systems because they can provide air space, water and nutrients. Not all trees and shrubs invade septic systems. Listed here are a number of species and the likelihood of their roots invading septic systems. The list is not exhaustive but includes those plants for which there is reliable information.

Trees with roots commonly invading septic systems:

Common Name	Latin Name
Boxelder	<i>Acer negundo</i>
Red Maple	<i>Acer rubrum</i>
Silver Maple	<i>Acer saccharinum</i>
Red Cedar	<i>Juniperus virginiana</i>
Cottonwood	<i>Populus deltoids</i>
Weeping Willow	<i>Salix alba Tristis</i>
Peachleaf Willow	<i>Salix amygdaloides</i>
Corkscrew Willow	<i>Salix matsudana Tortuosa</i>
Black Willow	<i>Salix nigra</i>
American Elm	<i>Ulmus Americana</i>
Siberian Elm	<i>Ulmus pumila</i>
Slippery Elm	<i>Ulmus rubra</i>

Trees with roots rarely invading septic systems:

Common Name	Latin Name
Norway Maple	<i>Acer platanoides</i>
Sugar Maple	<i>Acer saccharum</i>
White Ash	<i>Fraxinus Americana</i>
Green Ash	<i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i>
Red Pine	<i>Pinus resinosa</i>
White Pine	<i>Pinus Strobus</i>
White Oak	<i>Quercus alba</i>
Bur Oak	<i>Quercus macrocarpa</i>
Red Oak	<i>Quercus rubra</i>

Shrubs with roots commonly invading septic systems:

Common Name	Latin Name
Gray Dogwood	<i>Cornus racemosa</i>
Red-osier Dogwood	<i>Cornus stolonifera</i>
Autumn Olive	<i>Elacagnus umbellata</i>
Forsythia	<i>Forsythia spp.</i>
Common Buckthorn	<i>Rhamnus cathartica</i>
Pussy Willow	<i>Salix discolor</i>
Sandbar Willow	<i>Salix interior</i>

Information furnished by the
Morton Arboretum

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